

Testimony re Senate Bill 1075
Amending "The Revised School Code" to Include Genocide Education

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Senate Bill 1075 provides an opportunity to make Michigan students more compassionate, better citizens, and leaders on the international stage. By understanding the Holocaust, and genocide in general, Michigan students will be better equipped to empathize with marginalized communities around the world and to make informed decisions regarding humanitarian crises.

I moved to Michigan to go to law school, so I did not attend public school here as a child. Where I went to school, I read books like *Number the Stars*, *Anne Frank*, *Night*, *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, and many others where victims, real people and historically accurate characters, told their stories. These stories, often told by people my own age at the time I read them, helped me to imagine what it would be like to live through such atrocities. This groundwork was built upon every year, going back as far as I can remember.

In studying the Holocaust I learned about:

- Prejudice, racism, discrimination, and stereotyping
- The effects of these acts on the individuals involved and society at large
- The importance and value of diversity and living in a multicultural society
- The harm of apathy and indifference to oppression
- And, most importantly, **standing up to injustice and accepting people of all backgrounds**

Today, I may not be able to pass a test involving exact dates or key figures or locations of the Holocaust, but the stories of suffering and survival, the instances of standing by and doing nothing, and an understanding of the human capacity for evil have stayed with me. In fact, this compassion and sense of responsibility to prevent future acts of injustice are both major reasons why I went to law school.

Bearing in mind the importance of the lessons I learned and the routineness of learning about the Holocaust each year, you can imagine my shock when I discovered that students in Michigan know very little about the Holocaust. It was not so much the ignorance about basic facts that surprised me, it was just that **it had never occurred to me that teaching the Holocaust would ever be questioned.**

Since everyone I knew growing up knew something about the holocaust (whether it was who Hitler was, the rough time period it took place, the atrocities that took place, etc.), I decided to get involved with the project.

In researching and drafting work for this project, I have realized just how much understanding the Holocaust has **dramatically helped me understand the world I live in**: the Holocaust serves as a benchmark of one of the worst atrocities that has ever happened and, therefore, helps me gauge and understand other genocides like Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia.

But, Holocaust education has benefited more than just me. **One of the first requirements for genocide to occur is ignorance**: when people are ignorant of what is going on, atrocities can happen in the shadows because nobody is watching.

We need to educate people so that we “never forget” and so that we can prevent something like this from ever happening again. As the saying goes: “all that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.” How can we expect “good men” to do anything when they are ignorant? In the interest of a global community where basic human rights are to be upheld, we need to have at least the base knowledge of what the worst side of humanity looks like.

That is why I support this bill to teach students in Michigan about the Holocaust and hope that you do as well.